Testicular Cancer:
Self-Examination of the Testes

It is well known that the monthly breast self-exam is an effective part of early breast cancer detection for women. However, most men do not realize that following a similar self-exam routine for testicles is just as important.

According to the Testicular Cancer Resource Center, men should perform monthly self-exams of the testicles as early as age 15. In fact, though testicular cancer only accounts for 1 percent of all cancers in men, it is the most common form of cancer in men 15-35 years old. The risk is greater in white American men, who are five times more likely to be diagnosed with testicular cancer than African-American males.

WHEN TO PERFORM A SELF-EXAM

The best time to perform a self-exam of the testes is immediately after a warm shower when the scrotal skin is relaxed and its contents can be easily felt.

HOW TO PERFORM THE EXAM

Gently examine the testicle using both hands. Roll it between the thumb and index finger, applying a small amount of pressure in an effort to detect any irregularities of the surface or texture of the testis.

On the backside of the testis you will feel a soft tubular structure called the epididymis that is involved in storage and transport of sperm. It is immediately adjacent to the testicle.

Near the groin region higher in the scrotum is the vas deferens and associated blood vessels that supply the testicles. The vas deferens can be felt as a small, firm tube.

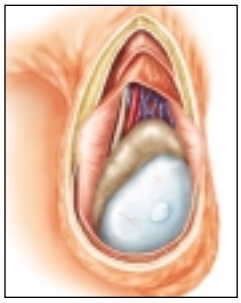
After examining one testis and cord, examine the opposite side. Compare the two sides to help establish an abnormality in one side or the other.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Feel for a small lump about the size of a pea on the front or side of the testicle. If you feel a natural rope-like structure along the back of the testicle, that is the epididymis. Learn what it feels like so that you do not confuse it with an abnormal mass.

IF YOU FIND A LUMP

Keep in mind that not all lumps are cancerous, but if you do find one, call your physician immediately. Only your physician can diagnose testicular cancer. When diagnosed early, testicular cancer is completely curable.



OTHER SIGNS

Other warning signs of testicular cancer include the following. If you notice any of these irregularities, contact your physician.

- Any enlargement of the testicle
- A significant loss of size in one of the testicles
- A feeling of heaviness in the scrotum
- A dull ache in the lower abdomen or in the groin
- A sudden collection of fluid in the scrotum
- Pain or discomfort in a testicle or in the scrotum
- Enlargement or tenderness of the breasts

For More Information

- The Virginia Urology Center. http://www.uro.com/tcancer.htm
- The Association of Cancer Online Resources. http://www.acor.org
- The Cancer Network. http://www.cancernetwork.com

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NOTES:

The purpose of this patient education handout is to further explain or remind you about a medical condition. This handout is a general guide only. If you have specific questions, be sure to discuss them with your health care provider.

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